GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1872
ANSWERED ON:12.03.2008
RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN AND THEIR BOATS
Pathak Shri Harin

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

to reply given to Unstarred Question No. 204 dated 27.02.08 and state:

(a) the time by which the 372 Indian Fishermen and 342 boats which continue to be in Pakistani custody are likely to be released;

(b) the details of the outcome of the first meeting of Judicial Committee which was held on 26-27 February, 2008; and

(c) the steps taken/being taken by the Government for their release?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a) During the SAARC Summit in New Delhi on 4 April 2007, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Shaukat Aziz had assured Prime Minister that Pakistan would take early action to return fishing boats seized from Indian fishermen to their owners. They also agreed to review the status of each other's citizens held prisoners in the two countries. We await the implementation of this commitment.

(b) The Judicial Committee has recommended that

(i) a consolidated list with full particulars and their present status of nationals in each others' jails be exchanged on 31st March 2008;

(ii) prisoners who have completed their sentences and whose national status has been verified be released forthwith;

(iii) special consideration, on compassionate and humanitarian basis, be accorded to women, juvenile and disabled prisoners for their repatriation;

(iv) as agreed between the two Governments, those fishermen in custody whose nationality status is confirmed be released forthwith and in remaining cases, Consular Access be provided by 31st March 2008;

(v) all efforts be made to arrange early release of all those prisoners, accused or convicted of minor offences, once their nationality status is confirmed; and

(vi) each country may immediately notify the other of the arrest of its nationals and provide Consular Access expeditiously.

(c) Government have been taking up the issue of the release of Indian fishermen and their boats regularly with the Government of Pakistan including at the highest level. It is hoped that in terms of the recommendation of the Judicial Committee, fishermen, whose national status is confirmed, would be released forthwith and in remaining cases consular access would be provided by 31 March 2008.